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ADDRESS DELIVERED BY Mr. JOHN McCONE AT THE  
THIRD ANNUAL LONGEVITY AWARDS CEREMONY (from a tape recording)

Members of the Central Intelligence Agency, I am exceedingly pleased to be here today on the occasion of the 16th Anniversary of the establishment of this Organization. It takes me back to my very early connection with the establishment of this Organization in 1947 and 1948 when I was working very closely with Secretary of Defense, Forrestal, and witnessed from his side some of the difficult problems that confronted him in the establishment of this Organization in which he had such great hopes. Hence, it has been a great pleasure for me to be associated with it during its maturity and to know the excellent product that resulted from his imagination and effort. I congratulate all of you who have been with this Organization for an extended period of time. I know your work has been rewarding and satisfying, and I am as equally confident that the years ahead will be of even greater satisfaction to all of you.

In a way, this is another anniversary for me as it is almost two years ago that President Kennedy convinced me that I should give up the relaxed and comfortable life that I was enjoying and accept his very flattering suggestion that I become Director of Central Intelligence. Since that time, I have devoted all of my waking hours to the affairs of the Intelligence Community and most particularly the Central Intelligence Agency. And, of course, no one sees this Agency regardless of their position in Government or in private life except those who are actually in the Agency. And therefore I suppose it might be an appropriate question for you to ask me: what are my impressions after two years of active association with this very unique and very capable Organization.

Of course, my impressions are manifold. I am everlastingly impressed with the dedication to duty on the part of the members of this Organization, both here at Headquarters and abroad. I am equally impressed with the depth of analysis, the skillful appraisal of difficult situations, the unique and daring operations that are sometimes planned and executed in the most skillful way, and dozens of other accomplishments that have led the Central Intelligence Agency and its members to positions of great esteem throughout the Government and among all those who are familiar with the products of this work.

However, there are three matters that are outstanding in my mind: they are first, the professionalism that exists in this Organization; second, the impressive educational and intellectual background of those associated with this Organization; and third and finally, the security that surrounds this Organization (and which I believe is of paramount importance for reasons that are obvious to all of you.)

The term professionalism is impressively applied to the number of men and women who are today receiving ten- and fifteen-year certificates. It is equally impressive to know that the sixty people in top command positions in the Agency enjoy an average of sixteen years of work in intelligence, and thirteen years of this service has been with the Central Intelligence Agency.

I think this is a very happy and a very unique situation in Washington or in any agency of the Government. More than eight hundred senior professionals are with the Agency today who were with the Agency in 1947. Station chiefs in fifty-one major posts average sixteen years in intelligence and thirteen and a half years with the Agency. These figures, these statistics, and a great many others which I will not attempt to repeat have given me a conviction that in this Organization there is a degree of professionalism that exists no place else in Government. This is what I tried to impress upon policymakers in this Government and upon all with whom I am inclined to discuss the affairs of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Turning now to the educational background which I spoke of, and which I believe to be so impressive, out of the top six hundred people in the Agency, 60% of them hold master's degrees or above. I could give you a number of statistics on the educational background of the people of this Organization and I could compare it with the educational background of all other departments of the Government, and I think it would amaze you to find that here in the Central Intelligence Agency is the greatest concentration of highly educated men and women of any place in the Government. A recent article in the Saturday Evening Post quoted me in this regard, and I would like to repeat what I told Mr. Stewart Alsop when he asked me a question regarding my impression of the personnel in the Central Intelligence Agency. I said to him this: "In all my life, I have never been associated with a group of men and women where I have found the educational and intellectual background that exists in this Organization. I don't think it exists in any department of the Government nor do I think it exists in any major private enterprise."

Finally, may I say just a word on the question of security. This is a matter of great concern to me because of my responsibility which charges me with the protection of intelligence methods and courses. The Central Intelligence Agency, I am convinced, maintains with meticulous care the best personnel security system that exists in Government. True, at times, this is an annoyance to some of us. On the other hand, it is a badge of responsibility in which all of us take great pride. We would not have it otherwise. There are several organizations in Government that are today reviewing their personnel security arrangements because of some unfortunate event of the last year or two. I have been called in to discuss these arrangements with representatives of other departments of Government, and I can assure you that when representative of other departments of Government observe the careful and meticulous manner in which our personnel discharge their responsibilities, not only by the Security Office itself but by all of you, it is a source of great satisfaction and a considerable amount of pride that such a system operates. And this is your responsibility, not only to observe what is there but to improve it, and to expand it so that the Central Intelligence Agency with its responsibility for development and the handling of the most sensitive information that exists throughout Government can say with great pride that despite the fact that we are the No. 1 target of the KGB and the Foreign Intelligence Services of a great many of the Communist countries, nevertheless, every measure is being taken that can possibly be taken to protect the information of a sensitive nature so important to the security of this country. And though we are proud that we are doing it and it is one of the reasons why our morale is good, it is something that we must always respect and build and improve.

So, in closing, I am complimenting you on this 16th Birthday, and I am complimenting all of you who are receiving ten-year and fifteen-year awards on this day. I want to repeat that the three matters which I have briefly spoken of -- the educational and intellectual background, the professionalism, and the recognition of security -- are perhaps three of the most important assets in the Central Intelligence Agency and are three assets that you all can be very proud of because they are part of you.

After distributing the certificates, Mr. McCone made this remark: "We hope you will not consider these diplomas but that you will continue the good work."